

Normative Demonstration in Constitutional Democracy:
An Expression of Political Love-Recognition

Honors Research Thesis

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1. Introduction

The zeitgeist of contemporary American politics was thrown in sharp relief by the events in Charlottesville on August 11th and 12th, 2017. The demonstrations and eventual violence shocked a nation that prides itself on democracy and freedom of expression. A group of far-right demonstrators, including white supremacists and neo-Nazis, gathered to protest the removal of the statue of a Confederate war general, which the City Council of Charlottesville had voted to remove. The far-right demonstrators were met by a broad coalition of counter-demonstrators, including college students, Christian groups, Socialists, and Antifa movement members. Escalating rhetoric and violence between the far-right demonstrators and counter-demonstrators culminated in a man driving his vehicle into a crowd of counter-demonstrators killing one, injuring 19, and leaving behind several questions. How did these demonstrations escalate? What could have been done differently? And what made the violence so prevalent? The answers to these questions are not simple, and in the process of answering them, we will find a host of other questions to explore. Keeping this in mind, we should begin by attempting to outline a tentative framework for interpreting these events.

The demonstrations in Charlottesville seemed from the outset fated to violence as groups with opposing beliefs gathered and manifested their ideological opposition physically. The physical nature of demonstrations lends itself toward an almost inevitable association of demonstrations with violence. This association was given further fuel at Charlottesville and demonstrations are generally viewed with a certain element of unease and distrust. In democratic theory, demonstrations seem, at first glance, to be a fairly anti-normative process of democratic participation. This is due to the demonstrators expressing a message primarily through their bodily presence, which when contrasted with verbal discourse, seems to be a less stable and

rational mode of expression that contains a greater possibility of violence. Yet, despite this intuition, demonstrations are still considered an integral part of a healthy constitutional democracy, requiring constitutional protection. These two conflicting impulses leave demonstrations in a conceptual limbo, both within and without normative democratic theory. Leaving demonstrations in this conceptual limbo, and thus lacking an understanding of demonstrations aligned with normative democratic theory, leaves us unable to adequately grasp and deal with the potential of violence that accompanies the tension between method and purpose in demonstrations. Furthermore, a framework that draws on this analysis can allow us to reconcile the democratic goals of a demonstration and its physical anti-deliberative methods to provide a justification for demonstrations and understand how demonstrations can serve democratic political goals.

To normatively integrate demonstrations into democratic theory requires understanding demonstrations as a link between democratic theory and struggles for recognition. The relationship between struggles for recognition and democratic theory have been explored extensively *in abstracto*.¹ However, demonstrations provide a concrete example of struggles of recognition being linked by social psychological mechanisms to “good” democratic outcomes. These social psychological mechanisms manifest themselves in an expression of political love-recognition which attains its political nature through uniting with a normative claim, predominately one in a struggle for respect or esteem recognition. This connection intersects at the socialized nature of the individual and can provide a framework for understanding these demonstrations that play a significant role in the process of democratic opinion-formation.

¹ Onni Hirvonen and Arto Laitinen, “Recognition and Democracy – An Introduction.” *Thesis Eleven* 134, no. 1 (2016): 3–12.

2. Literature Review

Demonstrations, as a distinct analytical concept have not been defined, so they tend to fall into broader taxonomies that differ depending on the field of study. I will outline where demonstrations fall in the lexicon of the various social sciences to start the process of delineating demonstrations as a distinct analytical concept.

In politics, demonstrations are generally either associated with acts of civil disobedience or the legal exercise of the right to assemble. My focus is primarily on demonstrations as an exercise of the right to assemble in order to contribute to democratic opinion formation; however, it is useful to briefly understand how this lies in relation to civil disobedience. The literature on civil disobedience is primarily concerned with the supralegal justification of an illegal but morally justified act. Rawls defines civil disobedience as a politically motivated, public, nonviolent and conscientious breach of law undertaken with the aim of bringing about a change in the aforementioned law.² Rawls sets out three main conditions for engaging in civil disobedience: the injustice must be significant and severe; other avenues of political participation have been exhausted; and engaging in civil disobedience is undertaken with an understanding and respect for the just constitution. These three main conditions for civil disobedience, as we will see, do come up again in regards to demonstrations, not as conditions, but rather, as germs of the framework of analysis for demonstrations. The distinction between civil disobedience and demonstrations are clear. While demonstrations can be a form of civil disobedience, to understand demonstrations as a normative concept requires a different source of justification which is derived from a more fundamental element of the democratic state, namely the right to assemble, which is inscribed in all democratic constitutions.

² Rawls, John, *A Theory of Justice*, (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1999), 320.

In a constitution authored by and for citizens, there are certain fundamental rights that are guaranteed to every citizen. I find the best justification for this conception of a constitution authored by and for citizens is based on Habermas's discourse-theoretic justification of basic rights. In Habermas's justification of basic rights, the way legal subjects become authors of their legal order is through "basic rights to equal opportunities to participate in the process of opinion and will formation in which citizens exercise their *political autonomy* and through which they generate legitimate law".³ These basic rights include, amongst others, the freedom of assembly and association. It is from this right to assemble and associate that demonstrations begin to arise as a distinct concept. Demonstrations are a way of participating in the process of opinion formation, which ultimately generates legitimate law. Yet, it is clear that demonstrations are distinct from the standard method of opinion formation, debate and discourse, in the public sphere.

The distinct characteristics of the demonstration stem from its existence as a physical phenomenon, which gives rise to unique mechanisms related to that physicality. In particular, demonstrations are subject to crowd phenomena, a field of study in social psychology. Research on crowd phenomena can be traced back to Le Bon's book, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, written in 1896. Le Bon views primarily crowds as a force of destruction. This cynical perspective is based on his concept of submergence, which Le Bon uses to explain how crowds behave. According to Le Bon, individuals that become submerged in crowds lose both internal and external restraints on their behavior. Since individuals in a crowd are indistinguishable from each other they lose a sense of individual responsibility and thereby a sense of conscious responsibility, which is then replaced by a collective unconscious. The crowd is then likely to

³ Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, Translated by William Rehg, (MIT Press, 1992), 123.

blindly follow impulses that arise from this collective unconscious, due to a lack of conscious responsibility. Le Bon's analysis of crowd phenomena reflects the basic impression that crowds are more barbaric than individuals and that crowds and demonstrations should not be trusted as rational or effective methods of democratic participation.

Although this model of submergence has been almost entirely discarded, Reicher, Spears, and Postmes argue in developing their Social Identity Model of Deindividuation Phenomena (SIDE), that Le Bon's broader conceptual legacy of understanding the crowd as a loss of identity still influences the study of crowd phenomena. While Le Bon viewed the crowd as a functioning through a loss of identity that led to uncontrolled behavior, the SIDE Model challenges the understanding of crowds as of a loss of identity. The SIDE model rejects the desocialized subject that has persisted from Le Bon's early studies of crowd phenomena. Rather, the SIDE model argues that there is no loss of identity, but an increase in the salience of the social aspect of a person's identity. The SIDE model rejects the desocialized subject and instead analyzes crowds based on a social understanding of self-hood. This is based on self-categorization theory, where different identities become salient under different circumstances.⁴ Rejecting the loss of identity in crowd phenomena is a key shift showing that crowd phenomena function not based on a loss of personal identity, but rather based on the increased salience of the social identity of the individual. To summarize the SIDE model: "the crowd is in the individual just as much when alone, if not more so".⁵ Consequently, crowds can no longer be understood as fundamentally irrational. By reconceptualizing the crowd as individuals who have not lost their sense of

⁴ John C Turner *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory*, (New York, NY, USA: B. Blackwell 1987).

⁵ Stephen D. Reicher, Russell Spears, and Tom Postmes, "A social identity model of deindividuation phenomena." *European Review of Social Psychology* 6, no. 1 (1995): 161-198, 191.

identity, we can ascribe a certain rational functioning to crowds that can be understood through group social psychological phenomena and the political theory of recognition.

The increased salience of social identity in crowds means that certain group effects begin to materialize. These group effects tie the normative function of the demonstration in the public sphere to the normative message of the demonstrators. Specifically, Intergroup Emotion Theory (IET) posits that when social identity is salient, appraisals of certain situations or events relevant to that particular social identity will trigger certain emotions.⁶ IET is based on an appraisal theory of emotion wherein our appraisals of situations and events cause an affective response.⁷ In the context of a demonstration, where social identity is salient, IET shows that the demonstrators are affectively connected through their shared social identity. This affective response in the context of a social group is key to understanding the normative content of demonstrations as part of a struggle for recognition.

The socialized conception of selfhood and the insights introduced in the SIDE and IET models are deeply connected to the political theory of recognition through both group emotions and trust-relations. Axel Honneth develops his politics of recognition from a psychology of recognition that has intersubjective mutual recognition of love at the core of his psychology of the subject. Love relations such as friendships, parent-child relationships, and intimate relationships are the first stage of a reciprocal recognition that establishes a relation-to-self in which people acquire basic confidence in themselves. Being loved or receiving love-recognition, in Honneth's view, leads to a feeling of self-confidence; which is conceptually prior to both respect-recognition, which relates to legal relations, and esteem-recognition, which relates to

⁶ Thierry Devos, Lisa Silver, and Diane Mackie, Experiencing intergroup emotions, In: *From Prejudice to Intergroup Emotions: Differentiated Reactions to Social Groups*. (Philadelphia: Psychology Press, 2002) 112.

⁷ Klaus R. Scherer, Angela Schorr, and Tom Johnstone. *Appraisal Processes in Emotion: Theory, Methods, Research*. (Oxford University Press, 2001).

communities of value. The psychological need for self-confidence and physical integrity, as a practical relation to self, is initially established through the experience of love and is then, following David Owen's expansion of the psychological maintenance of self-confidence, sustained through our relations of trust with the physical and social world.⁸ Trust-relations and affective emotions are fundamental constituents of both the political theory of recognition and demonstrations. Demonstrations are deeply tied to struggles for recognition both as overt claims for recognition of respect or esteem but also in a profound and affective psychological sense that is vital to the foundations of Honneth's political theory of recognition.

3. Defining Normative Demonstration

Having outlined the contours of demonstration, I can proceed with a tentative definition of demonstrations. Specifically, for present purposes, I define demonstration as: *a public gathering of a group of individuals with the intent to express a certain collective viewpoint and thereby participate in the process of democratic opinion formation.*

This definition includes a number of significant elements that I would like to draw attention to. First, a demonstration must be *a public gathering* which necessarily eliminates any sort of exclusive gathering of individuals. Thus, the demonstration must occur in a common or public space, such as a park or the street. The right to assemble, as a legal right, refers to the right to assemble in the public and since a demonstration is at a very rudimentary level, the physical manifestation of the right to assemble, it follows, that it must occur in the public. Secondly, a *group* of people requires a *minimum* of 2 individuals as per social psychological conventions, to

⁸ David Owen, "Self-government and 'democracy as reflexive co-operation', Reflections on Honneth's social and political ideal." In *Recognition and Power: Axel Honneth and the Tradition of Critical Social Theory*. (New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 290-320.

allow the formation of group dynamics.⁹ The formation of group dynamics needs to occur in order for group social psychological mechanism to take effect.¹⁰ Finally, the last and most important component of the definition is the intent of the demonstrators to participate in the process of democratic opinion formation. This means that the demonstrators, as I have identified them, subscribe to the democratic norms of nonviolence and are demonstrating with the goal of increasing the quality of the circulation of discourse in the public sphere. It is crucial to note that the demonstrators are not trying to subvert democratic processes, but are demonstrating with the intent of improving the quality of political opinion formation by bringing previously excluded arguments and information into the public sphere. This is how demonstrations play a normative role in democracies. In order for the content of demonstrations to be considered normative, they have to make a claim as to how the world ought to be. This claim, as we will later examine, is generally a claim for respect or esteem recognition. However, demonstrations can only make this claim if they fall within the prescribed norms of the constitutional democratic state.

At this point, perhaps a helpful clarification would be regarding what exactly normative is referring to, and what it means as applied to demonstrations. At the first level of analysis, normative refers to a sociological distinction often made in studies of collective action.¹¹ This taxonomy distinguishes collective action, of which demonstrations are a subset, by whether the collective action occurs within or without the prescribed norms of the existing system. In the case of a constitutional democratic state, operating within the norms means participating in the process of opinion and will formation, and generally foregoing violence to people and property,

⁹ Paul A. Hare, *Handbook of Small Group Research*, (New York: Free Press, 1976).

¹⁰ Although, for the analysis of normative demonstrations, more than the bare minimum of two individuals is likely necessary for the proper formation of group dynamics.

¹¹ Stephen C. Wright, Donald M. Taylor, and Fathali M. Moghaddam, "The Relationship of Perceptions and Emotions to Behavior in the Face of Collective Inequality." *Social Justice Research* 4, no. 3 (1990): 229–250.

whereas operating without the norms can generally be understood as undermining these norms through violence. If demonstrations are sociologically normative in democratic constitutional states, it leads to demonstrations being politically normative in the second level of analysis. By demonstrations operating within the norms of a democratic constitutional state, they take up their politically normative function of advancing a claim as to how things ought to be (normative content) and thereby contribute to the process of opinion formation (normative role).

Demonstrations are thus politically normative, both in role and content. In order to help ensure politically normative demonstrations, which contribute to democracy and are non-violent, an understanding of demonstrations is invaluable. My definition of demonstrations includes this normative element both in the sense of ascribing to societal norms, as well as the more consequential sense of participating in the process of opinion formation.

As I have conceived demonstrations, the demonstration is a nonviolent act with the express goal of democratic participation through the collective physical expression of normative claims, that are predominately for respect or esteem recognition. However, there are several things that are still unclear. Both the conditions under which people choose to demonstrate, and the connection between demonstrations and struggles for recognition remain unexamined. These aspects of a normative demonstration, as a method of improving the quality of information in the public sphere, require further investigation.

4. A Functional Analysis of Demonstration

An Empirical Overview

Prior to any further analysis of demonstrations, it will prove useful to show that demonstrations are empirically significant. To argue that a new framework is useful for the

examination of events, such as those that transpired at Charlottesville, would be bolstered by evidence that such an event was not isolated, but rather is part of a broader trend. If the events in Charlottesville are simply a deviation from a norm that can be explained by examining unusual and specific circumstances unique to Charlottesville, then the relative importance of an inquiry into demonstrations would be circumscribed. However, an empirical survey of participation in demonstrations reveals that this does not seem to be the case and the demonstrations at Charlottesville are a part of a more broadly significant phenomenon in western liberal democracies. There are a number of contemporary movements including the Black Lives Matter movement, LGBTQ and woman rights groups, along with various socialist groups that seem to be demonstrating frequently. Also, certain issues are increasingly being promoted in the public sphere through demonstrations, such as issues revolving around abortion, police violence, and gun control.¹² The demonstrations at Charlottesville are not isolated and the general impression one receives of demonstration being a significant phenomenon is reflected by the data. This intuition of the contemporary significance of demonstration extends beyond current events in the United States and is part of a broader trend.

Table 1. Participation in lawful demonstrations in Western countries 1974-2009 (in %)

<u>United States</u>					<u>Great Britain</u>					<u>West Germany</u>				
<u>1975</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2008</u>
11	12	15	21	17	6	10	13	13	15	9	14	25	22	26

¹² It is interesting to note that the primary participants in demonstrations for increased gun control, in wake of the shooting at Majory Stoneman Douglas High School, have been under the age of 18. This provides an interesting piece of evidence for the claim that demonstrations are a method of participating in democratic opinion formation. These high school students, across the country, cannot vote and yet they are participating in demonstrations in order to make their voices heard and influence democratic opinion formation even though they cannot participate in democratic will formation. This is a striking example of the power of demonstration to give expression to, in a certain sense, excluded viewpoints in the public sphere.

Table 2. Attending lawful/peaceful demonstrations in United States (in %)

	<u>1981-1984</u>	<u>1989-1993</u>	<u>1994-1998</u>	<u>1999-2004</u>	<u>2005-2009</u>	<u>2010-2014</u>
Have done	12	15	15	21	15	14
Might do	36	42	42	53	53	55
Would never do	46	39	39	24	29	30
Missing; Unknown	0	0	0	0	2	0
No answer	3	0	0	0	1	1
Don't know	3	4	4	1	0	0
(N)	465	1839	1542	1200	1249	2232

The data in Table 1 is drawn from The Political Action Study,¹³ which examined eight Western democracies from 1974-1975, and from The World Values Survey (WVS).¹⁴ Participants in the survey were asked about attending a lawful demonstration in the past year and could give a variety of responses indicating not only their participation in a demonstration, but also their general attitude toward participation in a demonstration. Examining the values in Table 1, there is a general upward trend of participation in lawful demonstrations in Great Britain and West Germany. Looking at the figures for the United States shows demonstrations are significant, if not following the exact same upward trajectory. Table 2 contains the specific data collected by the WVS from 1981-2014 in the U.S. While the number of respondents in Table 2 that said, they had participated in a demonstration does not necessarily show an upward trend, the respondents who said they might participate in a demonstration generally increased, and the number of participants who said they would never participate in a demonstration generally

¹³ Samuel H Barnes, and Max Kaase, *Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies*, (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1979).

¹⁴ World Values Survey, World Values Survey Association (www.worldvaluessurvey.org).

decreased. Another more recent poll conducted by the Washington Post found that one in five adults had attended a “attended a political rally, speech, or campaign event/ attended an organized protest, march, or demonstration of any kind”.¹⁵ Taken altogether, this provides strong support to the statement that overall demonstrations are a significant phenomenon.

Furthermore, contextualizing the events in Charlottesville as part of a broader trend among Western nations of demonstrating provides some substance to the claim that demonstrations are relevant and significant today and deserve specific focus and analysis as a distinct concept. Providing evidence that participation in demonstrations is a significant phenomenon, gives a practical motivation for engaging in a closer and more rigorous examination of demonstrations. To this end, it will be fruitful to examine the distinct features of demonstrations as physical methods of participating in democratic opinion formation.

The Tactical Logic of Demonstration

A distinct feature of demonstrations is that, as a method of participating in democratic opinion formation, they ultimately follow a logic of communicative rationality, wherein the demonstrations function in a manner oriented by a rationality, guided toward successful communication in the public sphere, in order to participate in political opinion formation. This does come with a caveat however, because demonstrations, due to their physicality, are still subject, in a certain sense, to a tactical logic stemming from the physical element associated with demonstrations. The physical expression of a message, using the body, has to contend with certain tactical considerations that accompany this physicality. An analysis of the tactical logic of demonstrations and the factors that contribute to this tactical logic will highlight important

¹⁵ “One in Five Adults Have Attended a Political Protest, Rally or Speech.” Washington Post, April 12, 2018.

aspects of demonstrations that do shape the normative content of demonstrations. The extra effort that must be generated to physically participate in a demonstration leads to certain tactical factors having an influence. These tactical factors have an influence through the process of determining whether to participate in a demonstration, especially, under what conditions demonstrations would be comparatively more effective than other forms of political participation. The factors that increase or decrease the likeliness of demonstration, which are *impact* and *ease of access*, do impact the occurrence of normative demonstrations. Throughout the following analysis of the tactical factors that contribute to the occurrence of demonstrations, it is important to note that the tactical logic of demonstrations is still guided by a communicative rationality in the final analysis. While the tactical logic of demonstrations does occur without immediate reference to the principles of communicative rationality, it does stem from the normative orientation of demonstrations toward the process of political participation. The *impact* of demonstrations is ultimately determined by the influence a demonstration has on the process of opinion and will formation. The *ease of access* to other forms of political participation is driven by determining which form of political participation is most effective for contributing to the public sphere. This is how the analysis of the tactical effectiveness of demonstrations is, in the final analysis, determined by the normative impulses of demonstrations. The first factor to examine is impact, which is strongly influenced by changes in the contemporary public sphere, and is insightfully illuminated through the concept of the public screen.

The Factor of Impact

The factor of impact, that is the impact a demonstration has on the process of opinion formation, is a tactical consideration that influences when groups decide to demonstrate. The

greater the impact of the demonstration on the process of opinion formation, the more effective the demonstration will be in fulfilling its normative function. This tactical consideration of effectiveness is strongly influenced by the contemporary nature of our public sphere and how ideas disseminate through it. In response to the changes in mass media dissemination and consumption, DeLuca and Peebles introduce the concept of a public screen as a necessary supplement to the public sphere.¹⁶ They argue that technology has vastly expanded the amount of information that the citizen is exposed to and that this information is often transcribed in images. While we idealize the public sphere as a place of dialogue, often and even more so today, it is a place of the dissemination of “a constant current of images and words”.¹⁷ This constant current of dissemination is identified as the public screen. The public screen is where groups perform image-events for dissemination on mass media. An example of such an image-event is a demonstration and in fact, DeLuca and Peebles use the WTO protests in Seattle as the case study for their idea of the public screen. The idea of the public screen provides us with an understanding that the impact of demonstrations is high. The demonstration is an impactful and effective manner of disseminating a viewpoint and participating in the public sphere. This change in the nature of our contemporary public sphere shows that the tactical effectiveness of a demonstration in regards to its impact on the public sphere and on opinion formation is high due to the ever-increasing number of screens in our lives that mediate what information enters our discourse. Simply put, the public screen increases the impact that a demonstration has today. An image-event such as a demonstration is a highly effective method for introducing information

¹⁶ Kevin Michael DeLuca & Jennifer Peebles, “From public sphere to public screen: democracy, activism, and the “violence” of Seattle”, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 19:2, (2002), 125-151.

¹⁷ DeLuca & Peebles, “From public sphere to public screen”, 135.

into the circulation of discourse. However, the public screen only is helpful in illuminating one of the tactical factors that normative demonstrations are subject to.

The Factor of Ease of Access

An analysis of the tactical factor of ease of access refers to the ease of access which groups have to other forms of political participation. The demonstration is unique because it is the physical embodiment of an opinion, rather than the verbalized expression of it. This means that a demonstration is not the standard method of discourse and deliberation that is given conceptual primacy in theories of deliberative democracy. This unique feature of demonstrations means that there must be specific circumstances in which citizens believe that demonstration is the most effective method for expressing their viewpoint. In a democracy, state institutions are set up for the expression of democratic opinion; the most obvious being the vote, but also, the constitutional rights of free speech and expression. Quite simply, in a democracy, the path of least resistance to express oneself is through verbal discourse. Getting out and physically mobilizing with a group of people requires effort and putting body in harm's way. We can reasonably infer from the relative increased effort required for a demonstration that if a collective is demonstrating they have a reason for doing so. This leads us to the factor of ease of access.

As has been shown, the overall tactical effectiveness of demonstrations has been increased through the changed nature of the public sphere, meaning the tactical factor of the impact of demonstrations is high. This suggests that, in a certain sense, the primary consideration groups will make when considering a demonstration is access to other avenues of democratic participation. Groups with decreased access to other avenues of political participation, or groups that have exhausted their attempts to participate through other avenues, are more likely to

demonstrate. This factor of ease of access contributes to a tactical logic of demonstrations that informs when a group will demonstrate. The most common contemporary issues that have low access to other methods of participation in the democratic opinion formation process are struggles for recognition. These struggles, by their very nature, have lower access to other avenues of participation because “the experience of social injustice is always measured in terms of withholding of some recognition held to be legitimate”.¹⁸ Since the recognition is being actively withheld, it is more likely to have difficulty being heard through the social and/or political institutions and structures that are withholding the recognition. More specifically, for example, if respect recognition, in the form of rights, is being withheld, the political institution that supports this is likely to be oriented toward preserving that withholding arrangement, making it more difficult for groups to effectively cause change through that same political institution. Take the case of police brutality and misconduct. Trying to directly alter police conduct through the same police department and local government that legitimizes that conduct is likely to be a challenging proposition. Therefore, the groups most likely to demonstrate are those that are engaged in a struggle for recognition such as religious, ethnic, or feminist groups. These are not the only groups that will demonstrate but, they are more likely to do so, because they are the most likely to have low ease of access to other methods of participation in the democratic opinion formation process.

This leads us to two separate but important conclusions from the standpoint of the tactical logic of demonstrations, and the analysis of the factors of this tactical logic. The first is that the impact of demonstrations on opinion formation is high due to the public screen and the general effectiveness of demonstrations as an image-event. The rapid proliferation of screens in our daily

¹⁸ Axel Honneth, “Recognition and justice: Outline of a plural theory of justice”, *Acta Sociologica* 47.4 (2004): 351-364, 352.

life makes us more likely to consume our information through images on these screens. Pictures and videos of demonstrations are more eye-catching than a statement put out by a group. This means people are simply more likely to turn to demonstration when they want to contribute to the democratic opinion formation process. Demonstrations are just more effective at ‘getting the job done’ than they used to be.

The second conclusion that can be drawn from the analysis of the tactical factors of demonstrations is that due to the ease of access factor, the content of demonstrations will most often be determined by the groups with low ease of access to other methods of political participation. The groups that are most likely to have low ease of access to other methods of participation are those actively engaged in a struggle for recognition, due to the nature of struggles for recognition. We can therefore conclude that the normative claims being advanced in demonstrations will generally be claims for recognition.¹⁹ Having examined the empirical significance and tactical logic of demonstrations we can now proceed to the most consequential aspect of the analysis of normative demonstrations.

5. Politics of Demonstrations

A Tension between Method and Purpose

The conclusions worked out in the last section clear the way for the most significant aspect of the analysis of demonstrations. So far, we have introduced the concept of a normative demonstration, which is both normative in the sense of conforming to the norms of a democratic society and normative in the sense of advancing a claim as to how the world ought to be by

¹⁹ It is important to note that groups not engaged in struggles for recognition can demonstrate as well, however, based on the contemporary analysis of the tactical factors of demonstrations, we do not generally find this to be the case.

participating in the process of democratic opinion formation. It has been shown empirically that participation in demonstrations is significant, and an analysis of the tactical logic of demonstrations, which focused on *impact* and *ease of access* showed that the impact of demonstrations in the public sphere has increased, and that the participants in demonstrations are primarily those who are engaged in struggles for recognition. This clears the way for an analysis of what makes demonstrations distinct and how through social psychological mechanisms, they function as a specific connection between struggles for recognition and normative democratic theory.

What is distinctive about a demonstration as a method of participating in democratic opinion formation is that it contains a tension between its method and purpose, which in the final analysis, lends the demonstration its power. The purpose of the demonstration is to participate in the deliberative process of democracy by introducing or bringing greater attention to excluded viewpoints. It is a democratic activity concerned with increasing the quality of information in the public sphere. This purpose of the demonstration is at odds with the methods through which this purpose is achieved. The method of physical demonstration contains a very undemocratic element, namely, the possibility of violence associated with the physical gathering of individuals.

While due to the normative purpose of the demonstration, the non-violent norms of democratic activity are generally adhered to in the demonstration, there is always a possibility of violence associated with a physical presence. This physical presence associated with a non-violent demonstration often provokes violence, whether from the state, demonstrators, or counter-demonstrations. The physical expression of opinion is a vulnerable enterprise because there is the possibility of another group undermining the nonviolent democratic purpose of the demonstration with an anti-democratic assault on the opinion expressed. This means that

demonstrating engenders the possibility of a physical undermining of the participation in the process of opinion formation, which is not the case in other methods of participating in the process of democratic opinion formation. However, in this vulnerability lies the power of the demonstration. Because a demonstration is the most vulnerable method of expressing a viewpoint and engaging in a liberal public sphere, it is paradoxically, the most powerful method. The possibility of violence stems entirely from the physicality of demonstrations, which requires a much closer examination in order to understand how demonstrations function and where they derive their power from.

Crowd Phenomena in Demonstrations

The physical aspect of demonstrations does not only simply necessitate the possibility of violence; it also necessitates a host of other phenomena, specifically social psychological phenomena. The demonstration is ultimately a physical crowd and as such, is subject to crowd phenomena. In examining these crowd phenomena, which demonstrations are subject to, we will draw closer to a connection with Honneth's concept of love-recognition. However, first we should understand the crowd phenomena in a demonstration and what role they play.

One of the primary crowd phenomena that occur in a demonstration is the increased salience of social identity. Reicher, Spears, and Postmes have developed the Social Identity and Deindividuation (SIDE) Model to describe the phenomena of deindividuation in crowds. Their model, supported by meta-analyses and experiments, show that deindividuating circumstances produce an increase in the salience of social identities and an increase in adherence to group norms.²⁰ The circumstances for conditions, which maximize the salience and expression of social

²⁰ Reicher, Spears, and Postmes, "A social identity model of deindividuation phenomena." 161-198.

identity, per the SIDE Model, are immersion in a group, lack of personalizing cues, identifiability to ingroup, and a lack of identifiability to outgroups.²¹ These circumstances are maximized in crowds, per the authors. Crowds are the “one place where groups can express their full understanding of the world without having to censor themselves for fear of others”.²²

The increased salience of our social identity is based on self-categorization theory where our sense of identity changes depending on the context of our surroundings. In the context of a crowd, the salience of our social identity with the crowd is increased in significance. This rather straightforward effect of the salience of the individual’s social identity being increased in the crowd leads to several other psychological processes. As the salience of the social identity increases in a crowd, “interpersonal differences become irrelevant, and the similarities between oneself and other ingroup members move to the psychological foreground”.²³ It is at this moment that the group membership acquires an affective component.

This affective component is conceptualized in Intergroup Emotion Theory (IET), which states that “when a social identity is salient, appraisals of situations or events relevant to that particular social identity will also trigger emotions”.²⁴ IET draws on appraisal theories of emotion where situations or events are appraised, to see if they favor or harm an individual’s concerns, goals, or motives. In the case of a crowd where social identity is salient, that appraisal of emotion means that individuals may not be personally concerned with a situation but will experience emotions about it because it may help or hurt their group.²⁵ IET ultimately shows that being in a crowd such as a demonstration is an affective experience where the members of a

²¹ Ibid., 192.

²² Ibid., 192.

²³ Devos et al. *Experiencing Intergroup Emotions*. 112.

²⁴ Ibid., 112.

²⁵ Ibid., 113.

group are connected to each other in a sense fundamental to their personality. The fundamental affective connection that the increased salience of social identity in a crowd brings about is connected at the psychological level to the concept of love-recognition.

Love-Recognition and Trust-Relations

The connection between love-recognition and demonstration is at the social psychological level. There are many parallels between how Honneth describes the process of the recognition of love and the social psychological processes we see in a demonstration. Honneth sees love-recognition as the “affirmation of independence that is guided—indeed supported by—care”.²⁶ As shown earlier, these demonstrations are usually organized to draw attention to some issue related to either (or both) modes of recognition: respect and esteem. The third of Honneth’s three modes of recognition is love, where we need to experience the “affectionate attention of concrete others”²⁷ to experience self-confidence. This self-confidence is important as a relation to self and in maintaining an ongoing experience of ourselves as individuals. This recognition of love comes from love relationships which “are constituted by strong emotional attachments among a small number of people”²⁸ and these emotional attachments are described by Honneth as “a communicative arc suspended between the experience of being able to be alone and the experience of being merged”.²⁹

This description of how mutual love recognition occurs is striking in its similarity to the relationship of the individual to the group, through the socialized nature of selfhood. In a crowd

²⁶ Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. (Cambridge, Mass: Polity Press, 1995), 107.

²⁷ Simon Thompson, *The Political Theory of Recognition. A Critical Introduction* (Polity, 2006), 25.

²⁸ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 95.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 105.

the individual forms a strong affective bond with other members of the group and this affective bond is formed through an internal increase in the experience of being merged with others through the increased salience of the social identity of the individual. The only part of the experience of being in a crowd that does not directly parallel Honneth's description of mutual love recognition is the limited scope he sets out for love-recognition. This can be addressed, however through a broader understanding of Honneth's concept of love-recognition.

According to Honneth, one of the threats to love-recognition is the undermining of bodily self-confidence through physical injury, and as examples of this, Honneth gives torture and rape. However, this limited set of threats to love-recognition can be understood more broadly. Owens specifically takes issue with Honneth limiting forms of disrespect to love-recognition or "love-disrespect" to exclusively physical integrity. While Owens acknowledges that basic self-confidence, as a practical relation-to-self, is initially formed in the experience of love, he argues the maintenance of bodily self-confidence is interwoven into trust relationships. These relations of trust are with not only our bodies, but also with the physical and social world. This critique of Honneth's conception of the limited scope of love-recognition to include trust relationships as necessary to the maintenance of bodily self-confidence is key to understanding how love-recognition creates both vulnerability and power in demonstrations. If "basic self-confidence is at stake in relations of trust"³⁰ then disruptions of these trust-relation would undermine bodily self-confidence and fundamentally undermine the psychological foundations of the individual.

Honneth states that love-recognition should have a scope limited to our significant others from whom we draw from for this mode of recognition; however, if we apply Owens reformulation of love-recognition, we see that the demonstration is a unique situation that serves

³⁰ David Owen, "Self-government and 'democracy as reflexive co-operation'" 317.

as an exception to Honneth's normally limited scope of love-recognition. Due to maximization of social identity in a demonstration, the salience of trust-relations between the demonstrators is increased and so the scope of love-recognition is briefly and powerfully expanded to include all members of the demonstration, as trust relations are formed amongst the demonstrators. Honneth says that physical violence damages the subject's integrity, which undermines their bodily confidence, but in the demonstration, this is not limited to physical violence. This is because the demonstrators are united in "loving care for the other's well-being in light of his or her individual needs".³¹ Not only can physical violence to the individual undermine their self-confidence as a practical relation-to-self, but perceived threats to the well-being of the other demonstrators can also threaten the maintenance of love-recognition. This is because when other demonstrators are threatened, which under the conditions of an expanded scope of love recognition we rely on for the maintenance of trust relations, this threatens the maintenance of our love-recognition in the demonstration. This increased salience of trust-relations makes the maintenance of love-recognition vulnerable and exposes the psychological foundations of the demonstrators. As Freud puts it, "we are never so defenseless against suffering as when we love".³² In a demonstration, under the condition of an expanded scope of love-recognition, the demonstrators are vulnerable. However, this does not indicate the impotence of demonstrations, but rather, paradoxically, indicates where the demonstration derives its power.

A Politics of Love-Recognition

The briefly and powerfully increased scope of love-recognition, due to affective connection amongst the participants in the demonstration and the increased salience of trust-

³¹Thompson, *The Political Theory of Recognition*, 109.

³² Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 52.

relations forms the basis for the understanding of demonstrations as an expression of a politics of love-recognition. The idea of political love-recognition may seem counterintuitive due to its prepolitical conceptualization; however, love-recognition only obtains its political character when it is united with a specific claim in the context of a demonstration's expanded scope of love-recognition. This specific claim is likely to be a claim for the types of recognition that Honneth theorized as explicitly political: respect and esteem. This understanding of demonstrations as an expression of political love-recognition explains both the power of normative demonstrations and the risk associated with these demonstrations.

Honneth sees the struggle for recognition as a form of political resistance, derived from an experience of disrespect that is accompanied by an affective sensation, which becomes an impetus for action. Honneth is stating that the emotions we feel when our recognition has been violated become the impetus for action and this works well for understanding struggles for recognition of respect and esteem, where the affective sensation that provides the motivation for action is not entirely devastating to the person. This is in contrast, however, to violations of love-recognition, which Honneth sees as tantamount to 'psychological death'. This places demonstrations, understood as an expanded form of love-recognition, in a very precarious position. How can there be an understanding of demonstrations as an expression of political love-recognition when the stakes of love-recognition are so high?

The answer is found in returning to what Honneth identified as the impetus for political resistance. In the political theory of recognition, the affective component is key; the affective sensation provides the motivation for political action. In a demonstration, due to the increased scope of love-recognition, the fear of a "psychological death", the fear of the rupture of the individuals understanding of self, provides an affective impetus for action. While any sort of

action motivated by actual psychological death would be absurd because an individual who does not have self-confidence as a practical relation-to-self could not participate in any sort of political activity, the fear of the possibility of psychological death can provide the affective motivation for action. This fear is generated by the risks posed to the demonstrator's trust-relations with the group and their physical bodies, that is associated with the expanded scope of love-recognition in a physical demonstration. That fear generates an impetus for action, which in the case of a demonstration, is demonstrating and uniting for the overt claim of the demonstration based on the desire to participate in democratic opinion formation. All normative demonstrations can thus be understood as an expression of political love-recognition, where the expanded scope of love-recognition provides a strong affective impetus for the advancing of a claim beyond the original affective impetus of the claim. This unification of love-recognition and a claim for recognition found in normative demonstrations suggests a way of understanding the tension between the method and purpose in a demonstration.

Since a normative demonstration is advancing a claim based on the desire to participate in democratic opinion formation, its overt purpose is to participate in the political process. However, the discursive power of that claim is derived from the method of the expression of a politics of love-recognition. By understanding how a demonstration derives its discursive power in advancing a claim, we can now examine the conditions for a productive expression of political love-recognition integrated into normative democratic theory, instead of a "politics" of love recognition that devolves into violent action under the banner of democracy. Understanding the demonstration as an expression of the politics of love-recognition that advance an overt claim of a social group reconciles the overtly deliberative purpose of demonstrations with its method.

This understanding of demonstrations has several implications for encouraging ‘good’ democratic outcomes from normative demonstrations.

6. Implications

In a demonstration, the participants are tying their message and/or claim for esteem or respect recognition to their need for love-recognition and thereby the discursive power of their message in the public sphere becomes considerably more powerful. However, along with this increased discursive power comes an increased vulnerability due to the inherent vulnerability of a politics of love recognition. The understanding of the politics of demonstrations as an expression of political love recognition reveals several aspects of normative demonstrations that are politically relevant however, the concrete implications of this understanding still need to be examined. There are multiple facets of demonstrations that can be better understood in light of a politics of love-recognition. The first of these aspects is regarding participants in demonstrations.

The participants in a demonstration are engaging in a normative democratic activity that has both a normative role and normative content. In light of the normative role of demonstrations in a constitutional democracy, demonstrators should orient themselves toward their ultimate goal of participation in the process of opinion formation. This then informs concrete actions the demonstrator should take. The participants in a demonstration should adhere to norms of non-violence. As soon as the demonstrators abrogate themselves of the responsibility to avoid violence and the potential for violence increases, the democratic function of the demonstration is at risk. When the demonstrators in a demonstration becomes violent the normative content—the message of the demonstration—loses a significant portion, if not all of its legitimacy. In losing its legitimacy, the discursive power generated by the collective expression of a viewpoint is lost.

The *raison d'être* of a demonstration in a democracy is participating in the process of opinion-formation. Violence by the demonstrators undermines the entire purpose of the demonstration and should be avoided as much as possible, without losing the potential for violence that gives the demonstration its power. When a demonstration is organized, all participants should be made aware of this goal of the demonstration and thus act accordingly.

Martin Luther King's *Letter from Birmingham Jail* is helpful in discussing how participants ought to be made aware of the goal of the demonstration. King outlines the four basic steps to any nonviolent campaign: "collection of facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self-purification; and direct action".³³ While King is talking more broadly about nonviolent protest in the context of civil disobedience, these four steps offer an illustrative guide for participants in demonstrations. These steps can be translated to demonstrations in a fairly straightforward manner. The demonstrators should first collect the facts to determine whether their viewpoint is being underrepresented in the public sphere. Then, they should attempt other methods of participating in democratic opinion formation, which corresponds to negotiation. Next, the demonstrators should go through a process King calls self-purification. For King self-purification is essentially education and mental preparation, involving self-reflection on one's motives, for the actual act of nonviolent protest. This education of demonstrators in light of a politics of love-recognition, involves the education of the normative goal of the demonstration (to improve the circulation of discourse in the public sphere) and how to best achieve that goal (through methods that do not undermine the legitimacy of the demonstrators). King's final step in a nonviolent campaign is direct action, which in the case of the politics of demonstrations corresponds to demonstrating. The understanding of the goals of a

³³ Martin Luther Jr. King, "Letter from Birmingham Jail," *U.C. Davis Law Review* 26, no. 4 (Summer 1993): 835-852.

demonstration, or what King calls self-purification, guides the actions of the demonstrators in the actual act of participating in the demonstrations as well.

The participants should not indicate a willingness for violence in the demonstration. This means that the participants in a demonstration should not carry weapons during the demonstration, especially not firearms.³⁴ They should use signage that promotes their viewpoint and does not explicitly condone violence through the implicit or explicit usage of symbols and language associated with violence. Generally, the manner in which the demonstrators conduct themselves is important to avoiding violence because the conduct of the demonstrators can indicate a willingness or lack of a willingness for violence. While a demonstration is an expression of the freedom to participate in the democratic process and therefore cannot have these restrictions placed on them by the law, demonstrators will more effectively be able to promote their viewpoint in the public sphere when they avoid, as much as possible, the actuality of violence while retaining the potential for violence. Maintaining the potential for violence is in a certain sense a low standard that simply allows for there to be the potential of physical contact amongst the demonstrators or between opposing groups, whether that be opposing demonstrations or demonstrations and the state. The potential for violence is preserved as long as the threat of an actuality of violence is preserved, and the threat of violence will always necessarily exist in the physical expression of a collective viewpoint. Furthermore, practically speaking, any mass demonstration will have law enforcement officers in attendance who also provide a potential for violence. Law enforcement is another facet of demonstrations that the understanding of normative demonstrations has implications for.

³⁴ One notable exception to this avoidance of symbols of violence in order to avoid delegitimizing the demonstration, is the Black Panthers Party's armed patrols and demonstrations to monitor the Oakland Police Department and oppose police brutality. In this case, carrying weapons increased the discursive power of their message due to the relation of their symbols of violence directly to their message.

The projection of state power in the form of law enforcement is likely to be encountered by demonstrators. Law enforcement will necessarily show up at any mass demonstration and will project an aura of violence. However, this violence is different in character than violence stemming from the demonstrators, which is delegitimizing to the demonstration, and this aura of police violence generally increases the discursive power of the demonstration. Demonstrations have to be enforced with the understanding that the demonstrators are participating in a legitimate, important, and vulnerable activity and therefore enforcement has to be oriented toward encouraging normative demonstration and avoiding the actuality of violence. The enforcement of the demonstration must occur in a manner that encourages the nonviolent liberal norms that underpin the demonstration, along with an understanding of the susceptibility of demonstrations to escalation and violence. The state must ensure that demonstrations are handled in a manner that takes the vulnerability of the demonstrators into consideration. Police should also actively keep a safe space, or “neutral zone” between demonstrators and counter-demonstrators, considering the collective’s susceptibility to violence, and should minimize the use of physical violence when at all possible because it will often only escalate to further violence. As the state responds to demonstrators with increasing violence, not only are they propagating violence amongst the demonstrators, they are also violating at a very basic level the demonstrator’s bodily self-confidence. The enforcement of demonstrations should occur with the acknowledgement of the fact that demonstrators are participating in a democratic process just as much as voters queuing up to cast their ballots. While, the specific details of the enforcement of these two methods of participating in democracy will naturally differ, the underlying understanding of both demonstrations and voting should be that the demonstrators and the voters are citizens engaged in a democratic process. Granted, the demonstration is, in a certain sense, a

more volatile democratic process but understanding demonstrations as an expression of the politics of love-recognition, provides the conceptual framework needed to properly enforce the demonstration. Not only is the participation in and enforcement of demonstrations informed by our understanding of demonstrations, the laws of the state regarding demonstrations are also informed.

A demonstration is ultimately an act of participation in a democracy. It is an act that is required in healthy democracy as an important failsafe to groups who find themselves unable to participate through other discursive channels. The laws of a state should reflect the goals of a demonstration and allow the demonstration to effectively present its message. This means that, counterintuitively, the law must protect this inherent possibility of violence and risk to the demonstrators while setting up the ideal conditions for the demonstration to remain nonviolent. The law should have non-discriminatory regulations regarding protest permits. The law should also ban the possession of weapons at the demonstrations and the law should explicitly not condone the establishment of “free-speech zones”. These free speech zones cordon off the protestors and blunt the power of the demonstration. Free speech zones exist in order to protect the safety of either the protestors or other people attending the gathering. While protecting the safety of protestors and others is important, our understanding of the politics of demonstrations show that this defangs the demonstration of its discursive power. Not only does it almost entirely remove the potential for violence, it also often places the demonstration outside of the view of the media, severely curtailing the impact of the demonstration through the public screen. Outlawing free speech zones, however, does not mean that the police cannot control the demonstration and redirect it so that the demonstration does not interfere with the proceedings of a legitimate event. The police are justified in this enforcement of a demonstration because the

guiding principle of their enforcement is to help maximize the discursive power of the demonstration while minimizing violence and destruction. Using this calculus, free speech zones too significantly decrease the discursive power of the demonstration to justify the minimization of actual violence. The trade-off of a free speech zone does not follow from the understanding of demonstrations as an expression of love- recognition.

While this is not an exhaustive survey of the implications of the politics of demonstrations they do show that an understanding of the politics of demonstrations has many practical implications for actual demonstrations which will ultimately help improve the quality of discourse in the public sphere and improve democratic function.

7. Conclusion

Looking back at the questions posed about the events in Charlottesville, they deserve a more in-depth analysis than can be provided here, but I can make a few brief points. First, using the concept of demonstration that I have explicated we can see that the reason the violence was so prevalent is no small part due to the expanded scope of love-recognition amongst both sets of demonstrators. An attack on one felt like an attack on the collective and the different normative claims the collectives stood for, causing both the escalation of violence and its prevalence. Secondly, another important contribution to the violence was the lack of awareness by protestors of the discursive purpose of their demonstration and the non-violence this purpose entails. This lack of knowledge caused conditions that made it easier for provocateurs to instigate violence between the groups and contributed to the escalation of violence. Using the concept of normative demonstration, we can see that certain groups amongst the demonstrators deviated extensively from the normative logic of demonstrations and thereby contributed significantly to the

violence.³⁵ Lastly, the police did not protect the demonstrators who were adhering to nonviolent norms and thereby encouraged violence through their tacit acceptance. Further examination of the events at Charlottesville using the framework of demonstrations is required to provide us a clearer understanding of what occurred and how to prevent it from occurring in the future.

Understanding demonstrations as an expression of political love-recognition unifies the tension between the method and purpose in demonstrations. The overt claim of the demonstration is understood as part of a process of participating in the political sphere, and the politics of love-recognition provides substance to that claim in a very fundamental manner to the participants of the demonstration. This deep, psychologically derived, substance of a claim advanced in a demonstration has its drawbacks primarily stemming from the danger of a deep affective response to a situation. If the expression of political love-recognition is threatened, then there could be a violent backlash. Understanding this provides us the conceptual tools in order to avoid this violence. Minimizing this risk while maximizing the discursive power of demonstrations guides our thoughts in this direction. In light of providing a justification for demonstrations, it is important to understand the power of the expression of political love-recognition to cut through discourse and deliberation and make a powerful contribution to the circulation of discourse in the public sphere. The concept of the politics of demonstration, as an expression of political love-recognition, provides a useful critical tool for both critiquing and improving our contemporary democratic condition.

Furthermore, this understanding of demonstrations fundamentally challenges the delineation of what can constitute the political in the political theory of recognition. By connecting democratic theory and the political theory of recognition in the understanding of

³⁵ Among the most notable: Redneck Revolt, the Nationalist Front, and the Ku Klux Klan.

normative demonstrations as an expression of political love-recognition, a new area of research has opened up concerning both normative demonstrations and other potential instances of political love-recognition. For instance, we now know how normative demonstrations function in constitutional democracies; however, we do not understand how a more authoritarian public sphere would impact the analysis of demonstrations. This and other research questions deserve further exploration; but let us not forget, as we pursue these questions, the brute reality of the potential danger and benefits of demonstration that motivate this research.

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